

GAMEDAYGUIDE

www.kstatecollegian.com | Friday, October 7, 2011 | K-State vs. Missouri

K-State defense improved, will need good showing



Sean Frye

Sometimes the most exciting and greatest moments happen when you fail to even see them coming.

Last weekend against the Baylor Bears, K-State Wildcats' linebacker Arthur Brown intercepted a pass from Robert Griffin III (the quarterback's first interception of the year) after bobbling the pass three times. The interception came late in the game and setup the game-winning field goal. The craziest thing about one of the most exciting wins in program history is that Brown never saw Griffin III on the play.

"It was a great play and a great opportunity," Brown said after the game. "I didn't see the quarterback during that play. It felt like it was a God-given catch at that time."

Because of that 36-35 win over the Bears, the Wildcats are 4-0, 1-0 in Big 12 play, and have earned a No. 20 ranking in the Associated Press' weekly poll. And once again, the Wildcats continue to rise primarily due to a rejuvenated defensive unit.

"It's a great bond within the program," Brown said. "We really see each other."

The Wildcats' defense passed, albeit not with an A-grade, arguably the toughest

test it will face all year in Griffin III and his high-powered, fast-paced offense.

"He's a great player and we'll probably never face another quarterback like him," Brown said. "It was a great opportunity for our defense and a great thing to build on."

Now that the Wildcats are ranked and the demons of the 106th ranked total defense last year are all but gone, the defense is now expected to perform like the 20th best team in the country.

Currently, the Wildcats rank 16th in total defense, allowing 292 yards-per-game. Through their first two games, they were the top total defensive team in the country, but they had faced extremely inferior offenses. Now after facing Miami and Baylor, the fact that the Wildcats are still ranked in the top 20 in total defense is a true testament to the legitimacy of the team.

The leader has certainly been Arthur Brown. He is first on the team with 33 tackles. That is 12 more than the second-best tackler on the team (cornerback David Garrett with 21). Griffin III even called Brown "their guy."

"Arthur is our guy and I'm right behind him," sophomore starting linebacker Tre Walker said. "I'm going to

have his back and I'm going to keep pushing him. There is no question about it, he is our player."

Now the defense is going to be asked to produce another stellar outing this Saturday when the Missouri Tigers roll into town. Despite being 2-2 and playing an undefeated, ranked team, the Tigers are three-point favorites against the team they have beaten five out of the last five times.

"I think that is a lot of drive for us to get a win here," defensive end Jordan Voelker

said. "They have had our card the last couple of years, so we are trying to change that a little bit."

The Tigers are led by James Franklin, their quarterback and total yards leader, and Henry Josey, the stellar running back who averages 12.4 yards-per-carry. Stopping those two will be the key for another good outing by the defense.

Ultimately though, this defense is defined by the progress that has been made this year. And that progress is significant. The defense has made a 180-degree turnaround from last year and is now one of the best units not only in the Big 12, but in the country.

"When we started here in the fall, I thought we were making progress," head coach Bill Snyder said. "Up to this point in time, we have. Gradually, we have become better in different areas."

Sean Frye is a sophomore in journalism and mass communications. Please send comments to sports@pub.ksu.edu.



Logan M. Jones | Collegian

K-State linebacker Arthur Brown tackles Baylor quarterback, Robert Griffin III for a loss late in the fourth quarter on Oct. 2. Brown finished the game with a team high eight tackles, one and a half sacks and a critical interception late in the game.

BY THE NUMBERS

Key numbers to think of during Saturday's game

1
-the amount of losses by K-State to an unranked league opponent when the Wildcats are ranked

The Wildcats are 22-1 under Bill Snyder when playing an unranked league opponent. Their only loss was to Colorado in 2001. Bill Snyder has shown the ability to get his team to be focused in a game. This will be important as K-State has to get just as amped for Missouri as they did the No. 15 ranked Baylor Bears on last Saturday. The Wildcats were able to do this last week after the huge win over Miami and will hope to do the same thing this Saturday.

6
-Collin Klein's ranking among quarterbacks on the season in rushing yards.

Klein has become very good at running the zone read this year for the Wildcats. His ability to fool the defense on whether or not he is handing the ball off to the running back has enabled him to be able to rush for the yardage that he has. The running game will be tested by the Missouri rush defense, as the Tigers are ranked in the top 20 nationally in stopping the run. The ability of Klein to fool the Missouri defense will go a long way in determining if the Wildcats can run their record to 5-0.

12.4
-the yards per carry by Missouri running back Henry Josey.

This is an incredible statistic by a running back in collegiate football. The Wildcats must play fundamental defense and not try and make the big hit. He is not a big running back, but if you do not keep your assignment, he has the ability to change the complexion of a game with one single carry.

20
-the ranking of the Wildcats entering Saturday's game with the Tigers

The Wildcats will go from the hunter to the hunted this week. The Tigers are only 2-2 on the season, but those losses have come at Arizona State and at Oklahoma in two tightly contested battles. Even though Missouri will have the mentality of ranking off the higher ranked team, it is critical that K-State comes out and plays the way that they have the past few weeks. If they are able to do this, the rest of the game should play out just fine and the Wildcats should continue to rise up the polls.

29
-the percentage of third down conversions converted by the Tigers on the season

This has been the Achilles heel of the Tigers offense this year. Missouri has been unable to sustain drives and it has really hurt them in their two losses. If the Wildcats are able to hold Missouri on third down, then it will give the K-State offense more time to control the clock and run the ball. The Wildcats are at their best when they are playing ball control offense and the best way to do that is by being able to stop the other team on third down.

394
-the amount of total yards by James Franklin against Oklahoma in the team's last game.

Franklin played very well against the Sooners in the Tigers 38-28 loss in Norman. Missouri was able to get a 14-3 lead early in the game, but was unable to hold the lead. Franklin has the ability to make plays with both his feet and his arm, so K-State must be prepared to defend against both. The Wildcats were able to force Griffin into the key mistake last week, so they have the experience and know what they need to do to slow him down. If the Wildcats are able to do this, then the chances of another win greatly increase.

-Compiled by Mark Kern

Decision makers



photos by Logan M. Jones | Collegian

Bill Snyder and Baylor head coach Art Briles shake hands following the Wildcats' victory on Oct. 2. Briles credited K-State's defense and crowd as game-breakers in the Bear's 36-35 loss.



The head referee during the Baylor game listens to the replay officials through a headset in the second half. Several plays were challenged and reviewed throughout the game, including a controversial backwards-pass by Baylor receiver Kendall Wright, which was ruled incomplete.

Klein keeps offense focused on red zone performance

Mark Kern
assistant sports editor

Going into the game last week against Baylor, all of the talk was on the Baylor Bears offense. The Bears came into the game averaging 51.3 points per game, and were led by Heisman Trophy candidate Robert Griffin. Griffin went into the game having thrown more touchdowns than incompletions. Griffin also had not thrown an interception on the season. At the end of last Saturday's game when plays needed to be made, it was the Wildcat offense that stepped up.

The Wildcat's offense was once again led by a gutsy performance by quarterback Collin Klein. In the game against the Bears, Klein accounted for 259 total yards and three touchdowns and made the plays down the stretch. The Wildcats were trailing 35-26 in the fourth quarter and when the offense had the ball, it was Klein's time to shine.

Klein lead the Wildcats on a 13 play, 70-yard drive that would end with a one yard touchdown run to cut the lead to 35-33 with six minutes left. With the crowd back in the game and after the defense made their own game-chang-

ing play, the Wildcats now had the opportunity to take the lead and get the upset.

The Wildcat's offense was able to get a little closer that set up the field goal opportunity for Anthony Cantele that added the final points in the 36-35 upset victory.

The offense again put on a gutsy performance in a game that they were not supposed to win. The offense was able to make the plays late in the game when they needed to. However, if there was one thing that Coach Snyder wants the offense to work on, it was their execution in the red-zone. The Wildcats had to settle for three field goals in eight of their attempts, and Snyder talked about this in a press conference.

"We are playing in the Big 12 conference and we are going to have some three and outs," Snyder said.

He noted that his team had several opportunities to put last week's game away earlier. "It is going to happen sometimes, we just have to get better in the red zone."

K-State will look to improve on their red-zone execution this Saturday



Logan M. Jones | Collegian

K-State tight end Andre McDonald bulls over a Kent State defender on Sept. 17. The Wildcats defeated Kent State in a shutout, 37-0.

OFFENSE | pg. 6

SCOUTING REPORT

JAMES FRANKLIN
QUARTERBACK # 1

James Franklin will present some of the same problems as Robert Griffin, an athletic quarterback who can throw the ball. Franklin will look to run the ball a little more than Griffin did, but does not quite have the arm like Griffin.

HENRY JOSEY
RUNNING BACK #20

Josey has ran for 529 yards during the season. That number looks even more impressive saying that he has only carried the ball 23 times. That is good for an average of 12.4 yards per carry. Josey has gamebreaking speed and the Wildcats must contain him and not allow him to break a big run.

LUKE LAMBERT
LINEBACKER # 33

Lambert enters the game with 24 tackles for the season. Lambert, who received a fifth year of eligibility due to a medical redshirt, will be a key component in helping the Missouri defense slow down the K-State rushing attack.

O = OFFENSE
X = DEFENSE

Breaking down Missouri, Tigers enter as three-point favorites

Sean Frye
staff writer

Bill Snyder can attest to the benefits that a bye week can give a team, as the open date that followed the Eastern Kentucky debacle helped his team tie up the loose ends and earn the Wildcats a 4-0 record with wins against Miami and Baylor.

Now K-State will be on the other end of the spectrum, as their next opponent, the Missouri Tigers, will be fresh off a bye week. The Tigers last game came against the then-No. 1 Oklahoma Sooners, a game they led 14-3 at one point but ended up dropping 38-28.

With that in mind, the Tigers, who have won the last five meetings against the Wildcats, will arrive into Manhattan on Saturday afternoon well-rested and the answers to what prevented them from beating the top ranked team in the country.

“What you want to do is you want to go play,” Missouri head coach Gary Pinkel said during Monday’s Big 12 football coaches teleconference. “It gets some players healthy and gets a jump on the Kansas State game. It works out well for us and our players are excited about getting going again.”

The Tigers are currently 2-2, with wins against Miami University (Ohio) and Western Illinois. Both losses have come at the hands of teams that are currently ranked. They dropped an overtime thriller to No. 22 Arizona State (unranked at the time) by a score of 37-30, then the heartbreaker to the Sooners two weeks ago.

Despite losing both their matchups to ranked opponents, the Tigers are three-point favorites to upend the No. 20 Wildcats according to several websites on Saturday. That puts even more pressure on the Tigers to come out with a victory, and, by default, a winning record instead of a losing record on Saturday.

“Our goal is to get our football team to play their best football game and compete, so we’ll see where it goes,” Pinkel said.

Offensively, the Tigers’ signal-caller is sophomore James Franklin. He has accounted for 1,245 total yards of offense, 985 through the air and 260 on the ground. He has seven touchdown passes to just one interception and is one of the top NFL prospects in his class.

However, the Tigers’ biggest offensive weapon so far this year has been running back Henry Josey. He has 533 yards rushing on just 43 attempts, equating to an astonishing 12.4 yards-per-carry. That has allowed the Tigers to acquire the eighth-best rushing offense in the NCAA. The Wildcats will have to find a way to contain Josey in order to slow down the diverse Tigers’ offensive attack, which has thrown and passed for over 200 yards in all four of their games so far this year.

“Missouri has similarities [to Baylor],” Snyder said. “You’ve got a running back who is your main focal point back there. They’re pretty good.”

On the defensive side of the ball, the Tigers have already shut out Western Illinois this year and held the Sooners to just 38 points, so they are a threat on that side of the ball as well. They have four interceptions on the year and are one of the better pass coverage teams in the country. Linebacker Andrew Wilson leads the team in tackles with 25. He is followed closely by linebacker Luke Lambert, who has 24 on the year.

“They’re not going to put someone on an island if they’re not a good pass defender,” Snyder said. “They are a well-coached football team.”

They even have a very reliable punter when it comes to special teams. Trey Barrow averages 48 yards-per-punt attempt, which leads the Big 12.

“They’ve got all of it,” Snyder said. “They’re a complete football team.”

Coming off a bye week, the Tigers will be hungry to avenge their close loss to the Sooners. In order for the Wildcats to have a chance, the number one priority will be on defense, as they have to shut down Josey.

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Week 6 games to watch: Red River Rivalry, conference play starts

Mark Kern
assistant sports editor



After a tough loss at home against Alabama, Florida has to now travel to No. 1 LSU. As good as the Alabama defense is, the LSU defense is equally as good. Florida, who lost quarterback Jeff Brantley last week to a knee injury, will be starting freshman Jeff Driskel. Driskel has gotten a little playing time this year, but has not been that impressive and Death Valley is not a place for a freshman to be making his first career start. Tyrann Mathieu is an All-American candidate at cornerback who is making a run at giving LSU back to back Thorpe Awards. The Thorpe Award, given to the best defensive back, was awarded to Patrick Peterson last year. Florida just does not have the weapons to give this defense a test so look for Mathieu and company to give the Gators all sorts of problems.



The Aggies will look to get back on the winning track after blowing another double-digit halftime lead. The Aggies defense again fell apart in the second half as they allowed Arkansas quarterback to throw for 511 yards. The Aggies looked good offensively as running back Christine Michael ran for 230 yards and three downs. While the Aggies are coming off a game in which they blew a big lead, the Red Raiders are coming off a game in which they came back from an early 20-0 deficit to KU. The Red Raiders' high-flying offensive attack is led by quarterback Seth Doege. Earlier in the year Doege set a NCAA record by completing 40-44 passes against New Mexico in a 59-13 victory. Both teams should be able to put up points on the scoreboard, so the difference in the game might just be which team can make a stop or two.



The Jayhawks will look to rebound from a 45-34 loss to Texas Tech in a game that they held a 20-0 lead in the first quarter. Quarterback Jordan Webb did not play like he has early in the season and it really hurt the team as they were trying to upset the Red Raiders. Webb must play better if the Jayhawks are going to have any chance of pulling off the upset this week in Stillwater, Okla. Brandon Weeden and Justin Blackmon form one of the best passing duos in the country. Weeden currently leads the country in passing yards with 1,572, including 475 yards against Texas A&M. As good as Texas Tech's offense was, Oklahoma State's is that much better. Look for the Cowboys to have a huge game offensively and for them to beat the Jayhawks going away.



Both teams looked very impressive in victories last weekend over top 25 teams. Auburn went to South Carolina and upset the Gamecocks 16-13. The Auburn defense, who has been criticized a lot for their lackluster play, shut down an offense that has such playmakers such as Marcus Lattimore and Alshon Jeffery. Arkansas was equally impressive coming back from a double digit deficit against Texas A&M to win 42-38. Quarterback Tyler Wilson threw for 511 yards in the victory. Wilson will test the Auburn defense to see exactly how much they have improved. Expect a high-scoring game and the victory to go to the Razorbacks in front of the home crowd.




Coming off of a rough season, the Longhorns appear to be back to playing Texas football. Case McCoy has come in and played very well and the defense has been downright nasty in the early part of the season. However, as it is every season, Saturday's game is the game that will show how good Texas can be this year. Oklahoma is led by a lethal offensive attack. Quarterback Landry Jones and wide receiver Ryan Broyles form what may be the best quarterback and wide receiver duo in all the country. Expect the Longhorns to come out motivated to show the country that they are back. However, Oklahoma will be ready also. Expect a hard fought, close game.



Coming off a heartbreaking loss to K-State, Robert Griffin III and the Baylor Bears will look to get back on track. Griffin threw for 346 yards and five touchdowns in the loss, but made one bad throw that proved to make the difference in the game. Iowa State is coming off a 37-14 loss to No. 11 ranked Texas. Iowa State hurt themselves with turnovers that put them in a 34-0 deficit. The game was never competitive after the Cyclones had gotten off to a 3-0 start on the season. Look for Robert Griffin III and the Bears to put up huge numbers offensively and get back in the win column.


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Week 6 AP Top 25 Poll

AP Top 25				
RK	TEAM	RECORD	PTS	PVS
1	LSU (40)	5-0	1473	1
2	Alabama (12)	5-0	1435	3
3	Oklahoma (7)	4-0	1397	2
4	Wisconsin	5-0	1266	7
5	Boise State (1)	4-0	1248	4
6	Oklahoma State	4-0	1191	5
7	Stanford	4-0	1185	6
8	Clemson	5-0	1093	13
9	Oregon	3-1	1028	9
10	Arkansas	4-1	860	18
11	Texas	4-0	833	17
12	Michigan	5-0	812	19
13	Georgia Tech	5-0	667	21
14	Nebraska	4-1	555	8
15	Auburn	4-1	550	NR
16	West Virginia	4-1	544	22
17	Florida	4-1	498	12
18	South Carolina	4-1	487	10
19	Illinois	5-0	428	24
20	Kansas State	4-0	349	NR
21	Virginia Tech	4-1	341	11
22	Arizona State	4-1	256	25
23	Florida State	2-2	237	23
24	Texas A&M	2-2	216	14
25	Baylor	3-1	186	15

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MATCHING UP

K-STATE RUSH OFFENSE VS. MISSOURI RUSH DEFENSE

When K-State squares off against Missouri on Saturday, the nation's 18th ranked rushing offense will go toe to toe with the 16th ranked rushing defense. Collin Klein has shown his ability to create big plays with his legs, but the Wildcats' quarterback has yet to face a defense this good against the run. The Tigers' defense, led by senior defensive lineman Dominique Hamilton and senior linebacker Will Ebner has been phenomenal against the run thus far, allowing an average of only 87 yards on the ground per game. While K-State has had success using multiple backs in a variation of offensive formations, its toughest challenge lies ahead against Missouri.

ADVANTAGE: NEITHER



MISSOURI PASS OFFENSE VS. K-STATE PASS DEFENSE

K-State's secondary was put to what will likely be the greatest test of the season last week against Baylor as it witnessed first-hand the athleticism of Robert Griffin III and Kendall Wright. While Missouri doesn't bring in an offense with that level of potency, the Tigers still have a strong passing attack. Franklin has a variety of solid receivers to choose from, but his primary target has been junior wide-out T.J. Moe. So far this season Missouri has averaged 263 yards a game through the air, with four receivers averaging over 30 yards per game. The Wildcats' defense may have been exposed against the Bears, but don't expect Missouri to replicate Griffin's numbers.

ADVANTAGE: MISSOURI



MISSOURI RUSH OFFENSE VS. K-STATE RUSH DEFENSE

Offensively, Missouri is about as balanced as a team can possibly be. Led by a pair of sophomores in quarterback James Franklin and running back Henry Josey, the Tigers present a powerful running attack. What stands out most statistically is the 12.4 yard average Josey has per carry. Those numbers hold up even after a game against the Oklahoma Sooners, who at the time were the number one team in the nation. Though the Wildcats were able to hold Baylor for under 100 yards on the ground, K-State's defensive linemen and linebackers will have their hands full as they try to slow down the Tigers' fiery young back.

ADVANTAGE: MISSOURI



K-STATE SPECIAL TEAMS VS. MISSOURI SPECIAL TEAMS

Special teams has slowly become an area of concern for the Wildcats as the season has progressed. Though kicker Anthony Cantele put up a game winning field goal against Baylor last week, his kickoffs have gradually given opponents better field position. Punter Ryan Doerr has had moderate success thus far, averaging 37.4 yards per attempt. However, the coverage teams for Missouri have been stellar this season, allowing an average of only 18.8 yards on kickoffs, and a measly 5.8 yards on punt returns.

ADVANTAGE: MISSOURI



K-STATE PASS OFFENSE VS. MISSOURI PASS DEFENSE

As weeks go by, the Wildcats continue to find more balance on offense. Last week K-State's passing game kept Baylor on its toes, gaining 146 yards through the air on 13 completions. The Tigers secondary has proven to be a weakness for the team after its first four games. Led by senior safety Kenji Jackson and sophomore defensive back E.J. Gaines, Missouri has given up an average of 262 passing yards a game. So far this season the Tigers have given up several big plays through the air, and while Klein may not take many chances downfield, the Wildcats' receivers are capable of making plenty of yards after a catch.

ADVANTAGE: K-STATE



INTANGIBLES


The 20th ranked Wildcats will go into Saturday's game with incredible amounts of confidence. After two back to back impressive wins over Miami and Baylor, K-State hopes to keep the train of momentum rolling. However, the Tigers are coming off a bye week, and have two weeks of preparation under their belt. For Missouri, K-State represents the third ranked team it has played this season, all of which have been on the road. With an overtime loss to Arizona State and an impressive outing against Oklahoma, the Tigers are battle-tested and in dire need of a marquee win.

ADVANTAGE: NEITHER



FINAL SCORE PREDICTION: 28-21 K-STATE

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Logan M. Jones | Collegian

K-Staters cheer on the Wildcats from the student section of Bill Snyder Family Stadium late in the fourth quarter of the game against Baylor on Oct. 1. The Wildcats trailed at the beginning of the fourth quarter, but scored late and with a late defensive stand K-State won, 36-35.

Kern’s Heisman watch: Week 6

1. RUSSELL WILSON

He was not on the list of candidates, but after the performance in the 48-17 over then No. 8 Nebraska, it was enough to catapult him to the top of the list. The former North Carolina State quarterback has stepped right in at quarterback for Wisconsin and added a dimension to their offense that they have not had in a long time. Wilson has been outstanding on the year as he has thrown for more than 1,100 yards to go along with 13 touchdowns and one interception. Not only has he been effective as a passer, but he has also put enough pressure on the defense with his ability to make plays with his feet. Wilson will be off this weekend as the Badgers are on their bye week, but expect Wilson to continue his hot play for a team with national title aspirations.

2. TRENT RICHARDSON

Going into a hostile environment to take on the Florida Gators, the Gators knew Richardson would be the focal point of the offense. It had no effect as Richardson was able to gash the Gators for a career high 181 yards and two touchdowns. Richardson has had to carry the load more this year as quarterback AJ McCarron is still learning how to be a starting quarterback in the Southeastern Conference. Richardson is going to be the guy that other defense focuses on stopping every week, but he still just keeps putting up big numbers. Look for Richardson to continue his success this week against Vanderbilt as the Crimson Tide appear to be on a collision course with No. 1 LSU.

3. ANDREW LUCK

The preseason favorite has seemingly been forgotten. However, people watching the game against UCLA will not forget the catch he had on the sideline. The Stanford Cardinal ran a reverse pass in which Andrew went out for a pass. Luck showed tremendous talent as he went up and caught it one-handed and was able to drag one foot so that the catch counted. Luck will look to have a big day against former Big 12 school Colorado. The Cardinal still have games with USC, Oregon and Notre Dame left on the dish, so there are still plenty of opportunities for him to jump back up to the number one spot.

4. ROBERT GRIFFIN

The former leader had an incredible game against K-State. He threw for 346 yards and five touchdowns against the Wildcat defense. Unfortunately, it is the one mistake that he made that is fresh in the people’s mind - the interception that he threw late in the game. To win the Heisman, you have to win the tough road games, and unfortunately Griffin was not able to lead his team to the victory. Griffin still has plenty of chances to get back in full contention as Baylor still has games versus Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Texas and Texas A&M.

The Heisman trophy race is in full effect. These guys are starting to separate themselves from the rest of the pack. It will be interesting to see what player has the great week to try and pull away from everybody else.

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ATHLETIC CALENDAR

Oct. 8-14

Saturday
Football
vs. Missouri
2:30 p.m. at Bill Snyder Family Stadium

Women’s Volleyball
@ Texas Tech
TBA

Monday

Women’s Golf
Susie Maxwell Classic
All Day Jimmie Austin GC - Norman, Okla.

Men’s Golf
David Toms Intercollegiate
All Day Southern Trace CC - Shreveport, LA.

Monday-Tuesday

Men’s Golf
Firestone Invitational
Akron, Ohio

Friday

Women’s Equestrian
vs. Baylor
10:00a.m. at Bill Snyder Family Stadium

Saturday

Women’s Volleyball
vs. Texas
7:00 p.m. Manhattan, Kan.

Football
@ Texas Tech
6:00p.m. Lubbock, Texas

Sunday

Cross Country
Pre- National Invitational
Terre Haute, Ind.

Women’s Golf
Susie Maxwell Classic
All Day Norman, Okla.

Oct. 17- 21

Tuesday

Men’s Golf
David Toms Intercollegiate
All Day Southern Trace CC - Shreveport, La.

Women’s Golf
Susie Maxwell Classic
All Day Jimmie Austin GC - Norman, Okla.

Wednesday

Women’s Volleyball
Kansas
6:30 p.m. Lawrence, Kan.

Thursday/ Friday

Women’s Tennis
TBA
All Day Tulsa, Okla.

Women’s Tennis
TBA
All Day Lawrence, Kan.

Women’s Equestrian
Auburn
TBA

- compiled by Caroline Sweeney

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Harper’s consistency on field helps Wildcat’s passing game



Logan M. Jones | Collegian
K-State receiver **Chris Harper** makes one of his many leaping catches this season against Kent State. Harper has been Klein's top target this season and will play a crucial role against the Tigers.

Sean Frye
staff writer

Offensively, there is no doubt who has been the most consistent, productive player of the season thus far - junior wide receiver Chris Harper. He has had at least three receptions in every game this season, including a career-high six against the Baylor Bears last week. In total, he has 17 receptions for 189 yards and two touchdowns this year in an offense that runs the ball the majority of the time.

Against the Eastern Kentucky Colonels in the first game of the season, a game where the Wildcats nearly lost, Harper saved the game by burning the cornerback covering him and catching a game-winning touchdown pass from 37 yards out with just 1:39 remaining in the game.

Last week though was when Harper truly emerged as the most reliable and effective offensive weapon for the Wildcats. He caught six balls for 67 yards and a touchdown, with the touchdown reception coming late in the first half on a third down and 14 situation from the Baylor 24-yard line.

That touchdown pulled the Wildcats within two points just before halftime. In another crucial spot, Harper converted four of his six receptions for first downs.

"It was real fun. It was a big game, probably the biggest game that I have played in since I have been here," Harper said at Tuesday's weekly press conference. "It was really big and it felt good to come out on top."

Harper, who is a native of Wichita, is a transfer from the University of Oregon, where he spent his freshman year. In his sole year as a Duck, he became the first player in eight years to run, catch and pass for a touchdown. He split his time between quarterback and wide receiver at Oregon.

After transferring from Oregon and sitting out the 2009 season as a redshirt, Harper quickly made his presence known last year as a member of the Wildcats' offense. In the 2010 season, Harper started seven games and appeared in all 13. His first touchdown as a Wildcat came against Nebraska during clean-up time.

Now he is the top target of starting quarterback Collin Klein, and his impact has earned him a place amongst the team's most elite players.

"He has an understanding of really what it takes to be really good at what you do," head coach Bill Snyder said at the press conference. "He's an athletic young guy, a big wide receiver, has good hands, runs well and has an understanding of what it takes to be the best. It's been a mental evolution that he's brought on himself and that's helped him in a very positive way."

Not only has Harper's impact on the field been noticed, but his mentality in the locker room and off the field has also had a big effect on the overall mindset of the team.

"Everybody's really buying in and guys believe we can do it this year," Harper said. "I definitely thought that we could do it and that is the different mentality from last year's team to this year. Last year, guys on the team wanted to just get to a bowl game but this year we want to win every game. Not just talk about it but we really want to go out there and win."

Now Harper will be looking to have another big impact against the Tigers, who are known for having one of the best pass coverage units in the Big 12.

"I definitely know [Missouri's] front four is really good," Harper said. "They've always had a pretty good defense since I've been here. They have a lot of returners on the secondary. Their secondary, I know those guys will be ready to play."

Franklin needs to use strengths to win

Mark Kern
assistant sports editor

Under Gary Pinkel's mentorship, Missouri has produced a list of very talented starting quarterbacks. This list includes Brad Smith, Chase Daniel, and Blaine Gabbert. All three of these quarterbacks are currently playing in the NFL. James Franklin hopes to continue the trend.

Coming into the season, people were counting on Franklin to do some big things and lead Missouri back to where they were a few years ago. However, the season did not get off to the start the fans and the team had hoped.

Missouri was able to escape their first game with a 17-6 win over Miami (OH). In that game, Franklin threw for 129 yards, a touchdown and an interception. In that game he did not look comfortable at the helm of the offense. Missouri fans were starting to get nervous that Franklin would not

be able to handle the pressure of being the quarterback.

In the past three games, Franklin has accounted for 1005 yards and nine touchdowns.

Game two and game three were road games for Missouri. The Tigers took on then ranked no.22 Arizona State and then the No.1 ranked Oklahoma Sooners. The key statistic for measuring a quarterback is wins and unfortunately for Franklin, the Tigers lost both of those games.

Fortunately for Franklin, he is young and has the trust of his head coach, Gary Pinkel.

In an interview with Dave Matter of The Columbia Daily Tribune, Pinkel said, "All quarterbacks go through a little bit of a growing process...That being said, I'm really pleased. It doesn't surprise me. He's a very, very poised guy. He has tremendous poise. Bombs are going off and he can still stay in his zone and his focus. The good news is I think he can get

a lot, lot better. I've been doing this a long time and he's doing a lot of good things."

Franklin's strength as a quarterback is his similarity to other great quarterbacks in the past. Franklin echoes Brad Smith with his ability to get out and make plays with his feet. He is similar to Chase Daniel with the leadership he has shown. Franklin compares to Blaine Gabbert because he is a big, strong-armed quarterback.

The key to stopping Franklin is going to be getting him rattled a little bit and making him rush things. As good as Franklin has been early in the season, he is still a young quarterback going into a hostile environment during conference play. This will be Franklin's third start on the road this year against a ranked team, so he has been in this situation recently. Franklin has not won one of those starts, so that may be motivation for him to come out and do whatever possible to get the win.

OFFENSE | Klein leads Wildcats

Continued from page 1

against Missouri. The Tigers are going to give the K-State offense a tougher challenge. Missouri enters the game with the 17th ranked rush defense, giving up an average of only 87 yards per game.

This will provide a great matchup as the Wildcats enter the game ranked 18th in rushing yards per game with an average of 217.3 yards per game.

This is where the game will be decided. Which line will win the battle up front? Will the K-State offensive line continue their success from the past few games, or will Missouri continue to shut opponents rushing attacks in check?

K-State has continued to improve every week, especially after the first week where fans were scared after the shaky performance against Eastern Kentucky. Since that game, the Wildcats are averaging over 33 points per game after scoring just 10 in that first game.

Klein has emerged as the leader of the K-State offense, and that appears to be just fine. Last year against Missouri, Klein set a career high rushing with 141 yards and also threw for a touchdown as the back-up quarterback. This year, Klein will look to continue his great play.

The Wildcats have not beaten Missouri since 2005. Add this with the No. 20 ranking and Bill Snyder Family Stadium should be rocking like it has not in years.

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